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ABSTRACT

This paper carefully examines the literary elements Scott O'Dell uses in his children's novel "The Captive," that so successfully engage even a reluctant reader. The paper explores the writer's style and subtle use of detail and foreshadowing. Quoting specific examples, the paper points out O'Dell's imaginative syntax and his ability to introduce unfamiliar language in such a context that the reader is able to comprehend. In the same manner, the paper illustrates O'Dell's skill at characterization without excessive narration and the way his descriptions of setting provide the reader with numerous and realistic details. The paper also discusses the pervasive themes of masculinity and death in the story and how both influence the main character. (HTH)

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A LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SCOTT O'DELL'S THE CAPTIVE* (1)

by

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Differences between children's and adults' literary preferences have been widely noted. That difference was clarified for me recently when I gave a grudging read to what seemed a prototypic adventure story. Such tales bored me years ago when others my age were devouring them. Trailing after an adverturesome hero doing brave deed does not evoke much of a response from me. Yet, as a teacher of children's literature, I know how such tales intrigue young readers. So, a sense of duty prevailing, I read.

As the hours went by, I was strangely drawn into a world and a time about which I knew little and initially cared less. I followed a hero who proved anything but typical. The experience ended, I stood aside from my disappointment that the adventure was momentarily halted, and wondered at my reaction. Was I in fact sorry the sequel was as yet unavailable? Could I really be so intrigued with the work of an author I had assiduously avoided because of his widely-acclaimed reputation as a writer of adventure fiction?

Long after I stopped abruptly with Kukulcan at the end of the parapet above the City of the Seven Serpents, I still wondered at Scott O'Dell's ability to capture a reluctant reader. So, I have read his novel again and again to determine its attraction.

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This paper presents my literary and linguistic analysis of the book. For child readers all of this will be unimportant. They will follow Julian Escobar eagerly as he sails, fights, resists authority, is tempted, and succumbs. It is the action that will be for children, as initially it was for me, the attraction. Yet there is far deeper art here. It is the author's ability to spin out an exciting story while at the same time demonstrating impressive mastery of literary elements, and sophisticated language, which set The Captive apart from other adventure stories.

STYLE

Perhaps the most ephemeral of literary elements is style, which has been defined variously. An important aspect of style is using language in subtle ways, to accomplish the writer's purpose, without becoming intrusive or overt. Clearly one of author O'Dell's strengths is accomplishing his literary purposes with finesse.

One mark of a skilled writer in any genre is the ability to weave in details so subtly that they aren't noticed, yet are available when needed later. O'Dell does this exceedingly well. For example, the first mention of Bravo, the black stallion, is on page 46 and the incident is quickly past. Yet this is consciously set up so that some 50 pages later, after the shipwreck, the reader is already familiar with the horse. What seemed incidental earlier is now seen as foundational. This time Bravo will be instrumental in the action, as he is the reason the young Mayan Indian girl, Ceela, is attracted to Julian's camp. Had not the horse been introduced earlier, a different reason for Ceela and Julian meeting would have been necessary.

The same craft is apparent related to part of the ship's cargo, the

gunpowder which is critical in Julian's assuming his role as the god Kukulcan. When gunpowder is first mentioned, on page 128, it is casually listed as part of the flotsam washed upon the beach after the shipwreck. Yet some 70 pages later, the gunpowder is absolutely critical in convincing the assembled Mayan multitude that their awaited-for god has come.

In addition to such foreshadowing, a writer of historic fiction must embed significant amounts of information without impeding the flow of action. When O'Dell wants to explain why several men were needed to carry the baskets of gold, he deftly explains the weight of the metal in two brief sentences. We learn about the Spanish custom of morning chocolate in a brief phrase which gives insight into a culture. We learn how the Spaniards protected cattle aboard ships in heavy rope slings during severe storms, again in a brief sentence. We learn the consequences of rats in a ship's hold when in a brief sentence Julian comes across a dead Indian's body:

> The soles of the man's feet had been gnawed away by rats, which were scurrying here and there.

In addition to such factual information establishing a sense of time and place, details are also essential in establishing character. Sometimes authors tell about character. At other times they show what a character is like. We learn what Don Luis is like through the description of his attitude toward his boat:

> Since Don Luis owned the Santa Margarita and had provisioned her and hired the crew . . . himself, it gave him the right, he was convinced, to run the ship. Small matter that he had never been to sea nor knew more than he had read in books . . .

LANGUAGE

A major part of writing style is language use. and O'Dell is a subtle language stylist. Most children, reading to follow the dramatic flow of the

plot, will not pause to notice the author's language, but O'Dell's words are the mark of a highly skilled craftsman.

Unfamiliar words are introduced gradually. We learn that Julian plays a glittern on page two. It could be any kind of musical instrument, though we learn five pages later that it is a three-stringed instrument. Such subtle weaving of details provides readers with vocabulary they need, without overwhelming them.

Unfamiliar words occur in carefully controlled contexts, so children can extract meaning even though the word is new. An example comes from the scene in which Julian is being guarded in the captain's cabin by another seaman.

> Barrios had been holding the lantern. He now set it in gimbels above the table.

From that skillfully crafted sentence, readers extract not only that a gimbel is something to hold a lantern, but also something about the size and relative position of the object. The gimbel is something light weight enough to be affixed to a wall above a table, yet sturdy enough to bear the weight of a lantern.

Sometimes familiar words are used imaginatively. To describe his own gullibility, Julian says:

> To this moment in my life I'd had the childish habit of swallowing, like a hungry troutlet, most promises that were offered me so long as they were seasoned with flattery.

That imaginative fish imagery, which catches our ear today, was natural to Julian's world, where boats were commonplace.

Words are repeated effectively. When Don Luis asks Julian to bless a group of Indians he refuses, protesting he is not a priest. Don Luis replies:

> Then sing. Sing the Slave Regina. Sing in your best voice, in your loudest and softest tones. Sing like a dove; sing like a lion. We will give the savages something to stir their hellish hearts.

The insistent repetition of the word sing is designed to weaken Julian's opposition.

The author's syntax is equally imaginative. Sometimes word choice results in unusual syntax. Instead of a commonplace sentence, "It began to thunder," the author writes, "It came on to thunder," a more imaginative construction.

There is pleasant irregularity in some of the syntax. For example, note the interruption of the serial enumeration in this sentence:

> He was followed by 6 musketeers, 6 bowmen, 4 cannoneers, 8 soldiers, all on mules, and 5 horses.

First the author sets up a rhythmic repetition, then he breaks it before resuming the rhythm.

In places O'Dell uses inverted order, as in the sentence: "A suitable stick I found on the beach." At other times an introductory clause leads into a sentence of conventional order: "Thinking to rally them, Guzman fired one of the cannon."

The author also uses language to establish character. The Indians, for example, talk in short five- or six-word sentences:

> "It is not our fight," Ayo said. "The Caribs did not come for us. They are tired of our flesh. They have told us so. It is your flesh they hunger for."

In contrast, Don Luis' formally-educated speech is much longer. At one point he is justifying his callous mistreatment of the Indians to Julian. He recalls a man Julian had idolized.

> But I have never heard you mention the fact that this Las Casas, who is highly regarded by both Their Majesties and

> by the Church, proposed that Negroes be shipped from Africa to the Indies.

That 35 word sentence is representative of the educated Spaniards' speech. It provides by length a contrast that reinforces the differences between the conquerors and their victims.

Despite O'Dell's skill in using language, it is in describing language that he creates a singular problem of credibility for readers. Julian encounters Ceelia, and hears for the first time the Mayan language she speaks.

In his typical egocentric way he describes it as an "outlandish sounding tongue." As he begins learning the language, the time lapse is described as simply a few weeks. Taking as this does only five pages of text, one is incredulous to discover that in this brief time Julian describes himself as beginning to "think in Mayan, not Spanish." That sounds unlikely, even for a Spanish seminarian who has learned three languages before leaving home. It is one of O'Dell's few stylistic misjudgments.

SETTING

In addition to style, all authors must devote at least minimal attention to setting. The task of writing historic fiction, however, is more difficult than in other genres. Not only must the author establish the authenticity of a specific place, but more particularly of a place separated in time. This must be done without overwhelming readers with excessive detail.

O'Dell is masterful in describing historic setting, and tells us of both indoor and outdoor spaces. The Indians, mistreated by the Spaniards, have run off into the jungle. After Julian has refused to help recapture the savages, he is detained in the captain's cabin.

> Besides a chart table, used for dining, and two charts bolted tight in the flooring, there was a small sofa, which I had never had the pleasure of using. In the aft bulwark was a large window with thick glass, very old and scratched inside and out. Through it I had a view of the beach, both arms of the bay, and when the caravel turned with the tide, a glimpse of the open sea.

At other times the description is less extensive, but equally evocative. When the recaptured Indians are returned to the clearing, they are herded, chained, beneath decks.

> The hold smelled of sadness. The Indians were huddled together, holding each other, sick. I felt sick myself.

In addition to these descriptions of interior spaces, other parts of the book include convincing descriptions of natural, outdoor settings. After he is cast upon the shore following the shipwreck, Julian finds everything he needs to survive in his island paradise, except fire. The distant volcano beckons, so he sets out to get fire:

> I had climbed only a third of the distance or less . . . but already the earth felt hot beneath my feet, and on my tongue was the coppery-taste of smoke. Leafless trees and stumps of various sizes that looked like black fangs were scattered over the slope . . . a wisp of smoke rose from one of the stumps.

A more pleasant exterior environment as he travels to the volcano is also described:

> Following the stream, I entered a cathedral-like grove. The trees, which were of a variety I'd never seen before, had delicate, transparent leaves the shape of coins, fastened to branches at such an angle that as I passed among them and stirred the air, they seemed to turn full circle on their stems. A heavy odor of many fragrances surrounded me as I moved along--of flowers blooming somewhere out of sight. . . . Orchids grew everywhere, and butterflies that looked like orchids danced in the green twilight.

In addition to setting, one of O'Dell's greatest strengths is his ability to evoke distinctly differentiated characters.

CHARACTERIZATION

Authors often describe characters' physical appearances. One of the most dramatic visual contrasts in the book is between Julian and the man who

will change his life, Cantu the dwarf. At the beginning of the book, the master of the ship, Don Luis, tries to convince Julian to accompany him on the journey. He comments that the Indians "will stand in awe of you, tall and fairhaired as you are." Later, Julian himself describes Don Luis:

> He was not tall, but his feathered hat and the extra lifts he wore on his boots gave the impression of height.

Tall, unlike his fellow shorter Spaniards, Julian is aware of his height and the stature of others.

Thus the appearance of Cantu, who is also Spanish, comes as a dramatic shock. As the canoe paddles along the estuary to stop in front of him, Julian sees:

> A dwarf who barely reached my belt. A lump with two legs and two long arms.

Despite the misshapen body, Julian notices the dwarf's most attractive feature:

> His eyes were almond-shaped, a luminous brown, large, beautiful, unexpected in a dwarf, and too beautiful for a man.

Later Julian learns to read the sometimes unspoken messages those eyes convey, in noticing that Cantu's "enormous eyes clouded over." Later those expressive eyes will send other messages. On approaching the city, Julian notices a premptory tone in Cantu's voice and it becomes apparent there will be future conflicts of will to settle. Julian tells Cantu he must from then on address him not with the familiar term of capitan, but by his proper name. Cantu turned and glanced up. "There was an insolent glint in his eyes."

Cantu, who comes only to Julian's waist, is swarthy and dark. In contrast, the dwarf, explaining his nefarious scheme, points out to Julian:

> You fit the legend precisely. You are young, tall, white, blue-eyed, and golden haired.

In addition to visual descriptions, O'Dell further defines characters by describing how they move. Cantu seems to Julian to be, despite his stature, "surprisingly graceful as he came toward me." Somewhat later this visual picture changes. A shoal of bright-colored crabs suddenly appears. Startled by the movement, Cantu himself "scuttled crabwise across the sand." Later, the dwarf is upset when a disturbance at the shore delays their departure for the city. Once again movement is described. He was "hopping around with his feathers dragging . . ."

Beyond simple descriptions of movement, the author also creates character by describing the consequences of their actions. Don Luis, who remains essentially two-dimensional, is malevolence personified. Early in the book Julian wonders at the "arrogance that a Spaniard like Don Luis drank in with his mother's milk." Don Luis is also described as feeling that "the waiting world was a toothsome peach to be plucked."

Later we see Don Luis' character most clearly in the scene where the caravel has been destroyed by the storm. Those men still alive are struggling in the enraged sea.

> Luis was clinging to a length of timber, which looked to be a piece of the mainmast. It was not big enough to support both men, and as the barber reached out to grasp it, Don Luis pushed his hand away.

It is of no consequence to him that in pushing away Don Pacheo's hand he is killing the barber.

Though O'Dell's characterization skills are applied to even minor characters, it is in his evocation of Julian that the author excells.

JULIAN

The book is most powerfully an in-depth analysis of the transformation of Julian from a prototypic Catholic seminarian into a manipulated masquerader. When the book opens, Don Luis is seeking his help, though Julian

protests he is "only a seminarian." Fearful of going, Julian recites a catalog of reasons, including that he has no clothes for the expedition, that he is awkward on a horse, and that he easily becomes seasick.

Having capitulated, and thus having been with the expedition for some time, Julian realizes if he is to retain any of his religious ideals, he will have to speak up. Forced labor mining gold has driven the Indians to desert. As the ship's captain, Senor Guzman, implored Julian to convince the scattered Indians to return to their work, Julian speaks his mind:

> I spoke slowly so there would be no doubt about what I am saying. "The truth is, sir, I don't wish them back. I wish them to stay where they are. Wherever it is, they are far better off than here."

Mutinous language, indeed, from a hesitant young seminarian and calculated to enrage the fiery ship's captain.

Later, as his concern over the Indian slaves grows, Julian confronts the leader of the expedition directly. Don Luis has been telling of the slave-taking exploits of a man Julian admires. Julian replies:

> "I am aware of this," I said. "Los Casas was wrong. What you are doing is wrong also. Enslaving the Indians. Taking gold that does not belong to you."

Don Luis taunts Julian that he has gladly accepted his share of the gold mined by the captive Indians. To this Julian retorts:

> "Not glad," I said. "The gold you pressed upon me I threw away. It's now at the bottom of the sea."

Clearly not a comment calculated to endear Julian to his master, it is nonetheless symbolic of his growing independence.

Julian fights to master his fears, not only of people but of the inanimate female god he inadvertently discovers while exploring the jungle after the shipwreck. The idol is admittedly of formidable size, described

by him as "twice my height," and we already know Julian to be taller than most Spaniards. In addition, however, the stone figure is intimidating because of its appearance:

> The feet were bare under the folds of a dress . . .
> The toes were long and grasped the earth. They were not
> toes but talons, hooked and pointed, dripping with blood.

In horror Julian slips away, but it takes great effort to wrest himself free of her compelling stare and flee.

Awakening one night, he ponders that the same stars which look down upon him also look down upon the stone idol:

> She had haunted me since the moment when I had fled the clearing.
> Soon, this very day . . . I must meet her half-closed eyes and
> stony gaze and face her down.

Readers get further insights into Julian's nature as author O'Dell describes his relations with Ceela, the Indian girl who befriends him after he is cast ashore following the shipwreck.

CEELA

Julian's comments about Ceela indicate his intrinsic, unconsidered attitude towards women in general, and toward her in particular. As a 16 year old seminarian, he is not many years older than she. He says she is 13 or 14, yet most of his references refer to "this Indian girl, a child." When one day she braids her hair atop her head, it makes her "look even older than she was." Despite this, during his attempts to explain Christ to her, he reflects that she is "a little savage, an ignorant girl."

Julian's contact with people unlike himself, who hold religious beliefs different than his, brings no enlightment. His parochial view of the world is not widened by his experiences. Once he finds a small wooden image Ceela has buried under his sleeping mat. "With great distaste I dug it up," and

then he threw the image into the sea. When Ceela hangs a pagan image on the rosary he has given her, he was "sorely tempted to berate her." He restrains himself, though later that night, thinking about the pagan idol Ceela worships, he resolves to destroy the stone image of the goddess.

Driven by religious ferver, Julian destroys the stone goddess with gunpowder, though his fanaticism does not totally obscure his judgment. When the idol lies in pieces at his feet he reflects:

> I had destroyed the stone image, but not the longings that would still lie deep in the heart of the girl who worshipped her. These I had not touched.

Such flashes of understanding rarely illuminate the murky religious ferver which drives him. As Julian and the dwarf Cantu set foot into the boat which will take them to final adulation atop the Temple of Kukulcan, his missionary zeal surfaces once again. Always he is thinking about the converts Don Luis promised as a fee for accompanying him on the expedition. The dwarf admits there are 30,000 subjects awaiting a leader.

> "All pagans?"
> "All."
> "Who have never heard of Christ?"
> "Not one."
> "You have made no effort to spread our Catholic faith?"

THE EVOLUTION OF JULIAN

Most impressively, The Captive is a study of a character in transition. The immense psychological changes which have occurred in Julian only become apparent near the end of the book. The dwarf tells Julian that even as he is being venerated, vanquishing armies approach led by Don Luis, though killed in the shipwreck. In fact he is alive, and swiftly emerging as a threat to Julian's godship. Julian urges immediate action.

> I was astounded at myself in urging war on Don Luis. Astounded that suddenly I had spoken, not as Julian Escobar, a seminarian,

> a lover of peace, a follower of the meek St. Francis, but as a powerful god Kukulcan.

The full extent of his debasement is apparent later that day. In the rarefied atmosphere atop the temple, he stands unmoved as victims are sacrificed. Chests are ripped open, hearts snatched out, and bodies dumped over the parapet.

> I had watched the sacrifices with growing disgust, but somehow they were distant, a happening that was not related to me, that would have taken place in memory of me had I not been there.

The complete transformation is apparent in a scene eerie because of its similarity with the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the Bible. Cantu is regaling Julian with the splendor of the city they shall build together, imperial in its wonderousness.

> The dwarf touched my arm. "Who are you now?" he asked. "Escobar or Kukulcan? Seminarian or Lord of the Shield that Mirrors the Sky?" With the same sly calculation I had often noticed, he studied my face. Not waiting for an answer, he answered me: "The seminarian, I can see, is dead."
> I could not deny him.

Scott O'Dell's talents are not limited to the ability to breathe life into characters, however. He is also able to evoke the nature of a society.

PERVASIVE MASCULINITY

Julian lives his entire adventure in a world that is pervasively masculine. Surrounded by Captain Roa, by Don Luis, by Balthasar Guzman, and by a variety of less important seamen like the barber-astronomer Juan Pacheco, among others, he is only vaguely aware of this male domination. His life is controlled from the beginning of the story by Don Luis. At the end of the story he is equally controlled by a dwarfed but still distinctly masculine Cantu. Undoubtedly his life before the story opens--life in the seminary--was similarly run by men.

In such a society, women are minimal figures. While at sea, Julian enjoys some orange conserve with one of the seamen, Alberto Barrios. The source of the conserve is described merely as "the girl from Cadiz." Later, when Julian discovers that the secret visitor to his camp is a girl, he notes similarities between her and his sister, though in his musings the sister is never named.

Julian is not unaware of his lack of experience with women. When Barrios came to him about a problem he was having with the girl from Cadiz, Julian admits:

> I knew nothing about marriage or girls, especially girls from Cadiz, but I was good at listening . . . .

For the first two-thirds of the book there are no female characters. Then, following the shipwreck, author O'Dell abruptly shifts to a more bucolic mood, and introduces two women. The first is a female character so strong, so grotesquely ugly, that it is indeed masculine in impact. The stone idol, towering to twice tall Julian's height, is an aggressive intruder into this male world. The contrast is made even more apparent because of the idol's explicit sexuality.

In contrast to the goddess, the other female, black-haired Ceela, is a lovely nocturnal visitor who leaves behind objects to make Julian's life easier. Yet until he surprises her at the idol, he doesn't realize she is a woman.

> I had thought I was alone, but as the light grew, I made out a figure lying prone, arms outstretched . . . clothed in a scarlet huipal. It was the same person, man or boy, I had seen in the meadow.

Not until she hears him, rises startled and turns to face him, does he realize it is a woman!

Ceela is the only named female in the book, yet she does not cause a major shift in plot as do the males. Her primary role, a stereotypic female one, is to provide such domestic necessities as a gold fishhook. Julian apparently enjoys her company, helping her learn to ride the black stallion, and in return, learning her language. Yet when Cantu forcefully presents the consequences of staying with Ceela, Julian hesitates only briefly before accepting the dwarf's alternative.

Another way O'Dell evokes the particularity of this time and place is by the pervasiveness of death he describes.

DEATH

Sometimes death comes from natural, though unidentified causes. When the Spaniards find only one survivor on an abandoned carrack, he tells of the rest: "Their limbs turned black and gangrenous. Their gums grew over their teeth." Death must have in this case been slow and painful.

In contrast, the swiftness of unexpected death is a chilling undercurrent running through the book. This daily companion of the men is regarded with equanimity; the results described tersely:

> A sailor, Juan Sosa, was climbing the mainmast when he suddenly paused. At the same moment I heard a whisper, as if a breeze had sprung up, and a flight of arrows passed over my head. Clutching himself, Juan fell backward into the sea.

Sometimes death comes at the hand of many. At other times a single enemy dispatches a victim. Such descriptions of the death are as terse as the death is sudden. After Barrios' plot to take over the ship is foiled, Guzman "felled him with one thrust of the sword." No more is said. At other times the death is described more fully. Usually these descriptions involve meticulous detailing of the Spaniards' cruelty. After the Indians have deserted the gold mining operation, Guzman and Don Luis bring them back.

> Somewhere in the middle of the line a man with gray hair . . . overcome with exhaustion, or perhaps fear . . . fell to his knees, struggled to get up but failed. Guzman reached down and swung his sabre. The rope severed, the old man's head flew off and rolled into the surf. Thus freed of the encumbering body, the Indians moved on.

Another description is included when Ayo, tribal chieftan, refuses to help Guzman by providing soldiers to fight a maurauding tribe.

> Guzman strode to the shed where the mastiffs were tethered . . . untied one of them . . . The (chieftan) was nearing the jungle when Guzman unleashed the mastiff. The dog bounded up the path in great leaps, is if it were chasing a rabbit. I don't think Ayo heard it coming, for the dog moved without a sound. Not until he had reached the edge of the jungle did Ayo turn, perhaps to say some last defiant word. The mastiff caught Ayo in the throat and bore him to the earth, shaking him like a bundle of sticks.

The Spanish are not alone in their inhumanity, however. Some of the more war-like Indian tribes would with equal enthusiasm dispatch the Spanish. A Carib chieftan and his crew of 100 confront the Spanish sailors.

> "Dogs," the cacique said, "We come to eat your arms and legs and fingers. We shall consume your flesh with sweet mango sauce."

More often, however, it is the placid Indians who meet death because of the Spanish. The Indian slaves who came with Don Luis are terrified by the storm. During its peak, one of the sailors reported that:

> . . . the Indians had left the hold and gone. He had seen them climb the forecastle companionway and, one by one, silently hurl themselves into the sea.

The everyday, accidental deaths on the ship, the numerous killings of the Spanish seamen, and the suicides give way to a more pastorale interlude after the shipwreck. Nevertheless, remnants of death remain.

> At the northernmost part of the cove, wedged between two rocks and wound around by kelp, I came upon the body of a man. The bones had been picked clean by creatures of the sea, except for the legs, which were encased in tight cordovan boots. It could have been the skeleton of one of Don Luis' retainers, possibly the barber, for he had worn boots of similar style. It was not that of Don Luis, however, it being too tall in stature.

Later in the story, the premeditated sacrificial deaths in the City of Seven Serpents are described in grisly detail. Such ritual death is integral to Mayan civilization. Cantu warns Julian that the explosion they will set off to establish Julian's godhead may inadvertently kill a dozen or so.

> He must have seen the expression on my face, for he quickly explained. "The Maya don't look upon death as we Spaniards do. They have much of it. To them, it is a friend. And blood that flows, especially when it flows copiously, fascinates them. You will see much of it before the day is over."

The Mayans live with death. Cantu tells Julian that Moctezuma, Emperor, sacrificed in one day twenty thousand slaves. This report has a surreal quality. Some hours later, Julian watches as victims are sacrificed in his honor.

> Seven priests came through a doorway at the end of the godhouse, followed by a muscular Indian clad only in a breechclout. A prisoner was led forth and placed upon the stone altar, face up. Its curved shape caused his chest to be thrust upward and pulled tight like the skin on a drum. Two priestly helpers spread-eagled the young man, holding his arms and legs, though he made no effort to move. The muscular Indian, the nacom, swiftly and surely ripped his obsidian knife across the victim's chest. He then reached down into the gaping wound, seized the exposed heart, and snatched it out.

It is fear of death that takes Julian captive. The seminarian is captive within the first few pages of the book: to defy Don Luis could easily bring death. The jab of his sword when he encounters Julian is playful, but meaningful nonetheless. The voyage takes Julian thousands of miles over many months. Conditions in his life change dramatically, and he, himself, changes equally dramatically in facing up to Don Luis. In the end, however, Julian's basic condition is unchanged: he is still captive. Once Cantu has presented the alternatives, there is only one choice. To refuse the dwarf's offer to deify him as the God Kukulcan will result inevitably in the Indians killing Julian. Some 180 pages after the journey began, he is still captive, the

only alternative to death. He says, "I had no choice except to play out the role the dwarf had devised for me." That sentence, with the word dwarf changed to the word nobleman, could as well be embedded in the book's second paragraph. So everything changes, and nothing changes. As Julian stands at the edge of the parapet, still captive, we await with anticipation the sequel which will detail his fate.

(1) O'Dell, Scott. The Captive. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

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